

SUCCESS STORY

WEST VIRGINIA DISTRICT OFFICE

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SBA's Certification Programs Help Small Business Owner Make A Positive Impact on West Virginia Business Community

PARKERSBURG, W.Va. – Judy Sheppard is a lot like the Energizer Bunny. As the president and CEO of Professional Services of America, Inc. (PSA, Inc.), Sheppard is constantly on the go seeking business opportunities for her human resources and human resources development business headquartered in Parkersburg, W.Va. She also is a strong advocate of women-owned and West Virginia businesses, two groups she relentlessly promotes throughout her travels around the country. “Each day I set a goal to do something that will make a positive impact on West Virginia’s business climate,” said Sheppard. “Making a difference in West Virginia and for West Virginia businesses is what keeps me going.”

Sheppard was recognized at the Women Impacting Public Policy’s national conference as the 2008 WIPP Member to Watch which demonstrates her commitment to the advancement of women-owned businesses.

PSA was incorporated in 1996 as a derivative from two companies established by Sheppard, Accumark Services, Inc. and Plastic Source Alternatives. As a result of being situated in West Virginia’s Polymer Alliance Zone, much of PSA’s work was reliant on the chemical industry. Sheppard felt even though PSA was doing well and growing, she needed to explore other avenues of growing the business. That is when she looked into the U.S. Small Business Administration’s certification programs. “I knew in order to take the company to the next level, government contracting was the way to go,” stated Sheppard. “Being a Native-American, woman-owned small business fit SBA’s certification program criteria and provided the channel into the world of government contracting.”

“Two words come to mind when I hear the name Judy Sheppard; passionate and believer,” said Melissa Loder, Business Development Specialist for the U.S. Small Business Administration’s West Virginia District Office. “She believes in West Virginia; in her fellow small business entrepreneurs; in doing her absolute best; and she believes all this with great passion. A person like this is always a pleasure to work with.”

The U.S. government is the world’s largest buyer of goods and services – from spacecraft and advanced scientific research to paper clips and landscaping services. Federal agencies are required to establish contracting goals, with at least 23 percent of all government spending targeted to small business. The SBA’s certification programs are aimed at leveling the playing field to allow small businesses to obtain a fair share of these government contracts

“The fact that PSA, Inc. is an 8(a), Small Disadvantaged Business and HUBZone certified company has helped my business achieve higher margins,” added Sheppard. “It really makes a difference when competing against larger companies.”

The 8(a) program is an essential instrument for helping socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs gain access to the economic mainstream of American society. The program provides access to sole-source federal government contracts. “So far, we have been able to obtain approximately a dozen government contracts through certification programs,” said Sheppard. “Though each contract is a bit different,

they all have been well worth the effort. I would encourage anyone remotely interested in government contracting to take the initiative and see if they qualify for any of the certification programs. I am certainly glad I did.”

Sheppard was recently recognized for her outstanding business achievements by West Virginia University at Parkersburg. She received an honorary degree at the institution’s graduation ceremony this past December.

If you are interested in learning more about government contracting, contact Melissa Loder at SBA’s West Virginia District Office at (304) 623-5631 extension 224 (email: melissa.loder@sba.gov), or visit the SBA’s web site at www.sba.gov and select Contracting Opportunities under the Services heading.

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